



CANADA

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 67/38

CANADA AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Speech by the Honourable Paul Martin, Secretary of State for External Affairs, to the Biennial Convention of the Canada Ethnic Press Federation, Winnipeg, November 24, 1967.

Tonight I should like to talk about human rights both in the domestic and international contexts.

To define human rights and then to assure their realization around the world are among the greatest tasks which face mankind. The dignity of the individual, the rights of ethnic groups, peoples and nations stand on a par with the economic development of our planet and the abolition of the nuclear threat as fundamental goals for us all in the twentieth century. Failure to achieve any of these goals bodes ill for world peace and stability.

What are some of the questions which might be asked about the protection of human rights in Canada? Are we safeguarding the rights of Canadians "without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion"? My answer is "yes", although I know that there have been problems in the past both as to the interpretation and implementation of the liberties of all Canadians. Official policy, however, is clear and individual attitudes have been, on the whole, forthcoming and tolerant when compared with the policy and action of other countries. One strong indication of the freedom enjoyed in Canada lies in the continuing flow of people to this country from around the world. Would literally millions voluntarily choose Canada if this were not a free democratic and open society?

In examining human rights in Canada, I should like to discuss three relevant issues: immigration, the national unity debate and the multi-ethnic nature of the country.

Traditionally, this country has sought to increase its population through immigration, thus providing new skills, new ideas and new enthusiasms. One of the results of this policy has been the rapid growth since the turn of the century of a population with origins other than either Britain or France.

The census statistics for 1951 and 1961 reveal certain significant patterns. Out of a total population growth of 4,228,818 over the decade,